The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
J. H. OLDHAM

No. 29 MAY 15th, 1940

DEAR MEMBER,

I have had a letter from one of our members who knows Germany well in which he urges that the just condemnation of the Nazi régime and the neo-paganism which it represents should not be allowed to obscure the fact that there is resistance to these evils in Germany itself. He has in mind more particularly the loyal witness to their faith of Christians since the persecution began. Apart from Russia and Spain, it is in Germany that Christianity has been put to the test. Christians there have suffered for their belief, have faced imprisonment and flogging, the horrors of the concentration camp and even death. Full evidence regarding the extent of the persecution is not yet available, but the fact of severe persecution is undeniable. It is quite wrong to say that the German nation has abandoned Christianity; numbers do not count in an ordeal of this kind. Is there any professedly Christian country in which the majority of the nation would hold firmly to their religion in the face of persecution? It is still possible for Christians in our own and many other countries to debate their problems and the tasks which lie before them. Christians in Germany have to face a very different situation. The enemy there is in control and Christians are faced with a choice between submission or making some kind of compromise and facing immediate personal danger with the members of the Gestapo waiting outside their doors. It is not only a question of fairness, the writer urges, but also a question of vital importance for the Church that Christians outside Germany should pay tribute to the vanguard of the Christian faith within Germany and should reach out in prayer and sympathy to their unknown German brethren whose faith is being tested so severely. We find it all too easy to-day to believe that what is not in the papers or in print does not exist. But German Christianity exists, voiceless, but a spiritual force of greater significance than is generally realised.

HOW TO CRITICISE CONSTRUCTIVELY

Many of the letters we receive contain direct or indirect complaints about the Churches and their leadership. Negative criticism, though an agreeable way of letting off steam, is notoriously futile. How can discontented churchmen turn their discontents to good effect? The ordinary Christian is hardly in a position to influence the national leadership of the Churches, but it is open to any individual or group to take some local initiative.

I heard the other day of a group of half-a-dozen young Anglican clergymen in a northern industrial city who have been meeting regularly during the past six months in order to thrash out an answer to the questions: What ought the Church in this city to be doing that it is not doing? What lead do we wish to see given by those in responsible positions? As a result of their deliberations they produced a document

which they are presenting to their seniors. Its general tenor may be inferred from the following passage in the preamble:

"We belong to different traditions of churchmanship and we approach some problems from divergent points of view, but we are united on one point which transcends these differences; we are profoundly discontented with the present ordering of the life of the Church of England, and are agreed that only radical action can enable the Church to fulfil its function. We welcome the lead given by many individuals in the Church. But for the most part the Church appears to be either unconscious of its divine trust, and so is anxious merely to preserve itself; or else to be in a state of spiritual parochialism and of unwarranted complacency with outworn techniques and the methods of an unsuccessful past. The majority of the clergy still exhibit an inordinate complacency and a quiet confidence in the policy of sanctified inertia—these two attitudes are often identified with 'faith' and with 'spiritual' combat. Where they are alive to the urgency of the situation, to the need for decisive action, for the most part they do not know where to begin or how to pit their isolated effort against the complexity and immobility of the vast mass of the Church of England embedded in a secular state. We do not see a clear way out of the situation ourselves; and we do not come to you with a plan for the revivification of the Church, but wish to express to you something of the profound discontent in the minds of some of the younger clergy, and to ask you for your advice and your leadership."

Following on this introduction there is a statement of some of the chief points which call for action. If these young men do not get the definite advice and leadership for which they are asking, they do not propose to let the matter rest.

THE CHRISTIAN NEWS-LETTER BOOKS

Nearly 30,000 of the Christian News-Letter Books have already been sold, many of them doubtless to members of the News-Letter, for I have received many letters of appreciation and comment.

The "get-up" of the books has been much admired, and they have been very favourably reviewed. You will see from their titles that they deal with topics which from the standpoint of the News-Letter, are of great importance, and which can be discussed in the books at greater length and in more detail than space in the News-Letter allows. Many of our members have stressed the need for inexpensive books, and I hope you will make this shilling series widely known. Other books will be published in due course.

THE SUPPLEMENT

The writer of this week's Supplement is Dr. Adolf Löwe, who is an honorary special lecturer in the University of Manchester. He formerly lived in Germany, but has recently, to the advantage of this country, become one of its citizens. Before coming to Great Britain he was Professor of Economics and Social Sciences in the Universities of Kiel and Frankfurt-am-Main. He acted as technical adviser to the German Government at the third International Labour Conference in Geneva in 1921, at the International Economic Conference in Genoa in 1922, at the negotiations with the Dawes Committee 1924, and at the League of Nations' Committee on Business Cycles, 1925. He has written a number of books and papers dealing with technical economic subjects.

I regard his insistence on the necessity of action now as one of the most important things that can be said in the present situation. If we fail to act during the war, it is

almost certain that the situation with which we shall have to deal when it is over will have taken such definite shape that many of the things which are essential for a new order of society will no longer be possible.

THE CHRISTIAN NEWS-LETTER

I called your attention a fortnight ago to the crisis affecting the News-Letter as a result of the decision of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to increase the postage on printed matter in the United Kingdom from ½d. to 1d.

The News-Letter, with its present membership of a little over 10,000 is not in any sense a paying proposition. The subscriptions cover the actual cost of paper, printing, postage (at the old rate) and despatch, but leave a very small margin indeed to help to meet the cost of all the editorial and research work necessary for producing the Letter, the large correspondence connected with it, office rent and other overhead charges. These have all to be met from other sources. The increase in postage involves an additional expenditure on existing subscriptions (taking into account the date of their termination) of approximately £500 a year and some means of meeting this must be found.

The crisis is one which we can surmount only with the co-operation of our members, and I at once took steps to seek your advice. I am most grateful to the many of you who have written in response to my request. This expression of opinion has been of the greatest help to us in coming to a decision.

The striking fact in the correspondence is the number of those who do not want any change in the form of the News-Letter and would rather pay an increased subscription.

A number of members, on the other hand, are in favour of issuing the News-Letter fortnightly instead of weekly. We have considered this solution, but there are three difficulties in the way of adopting it. First, it would not be acceptable to all our members. Secondly, it would create practical difficulties. We are at present offering you for your subscription fifty-two News-Letters in the year. Some of those who have written would be content to receive instead only twenty-six Letters in the year, but I cannot help thinking that many of our members would be disappointed if they received only half the number of issues which we originally promised. We could not offer you at the same rate fifty-two numbers spread over a period of two years, since the permanent charges would in that case be doubled. The News-Letter could not possibly stand this. To hit on some intermediate arrangement would not be easy or likely to be satisfactory to all. Thirdly, and perhaps most important, we are only beginning to get into our stride and develop our contacts in many directions, and if we are to attain our aims and keep you in touch with the important things that are taking place in the world, I do not think that there will be enough room in a fortnightly Letter for all the news that our members ought to have.

The whole question has been carefully considered at two meetings of the Board responsible for editing the News-Letter. We have come to the following conclusions.

The News-Letter will have a Supplement only once a fortnight. This will meet the wishes of the many who have written to say that they get rather more matter demanding careful thought than they can absorb in a week. On the other hand, those who want to receive a News-Letter weekly will get it. I will do my best to adapt the News-Letter to the new arrangement.

This plan will effect some saving in the cost of production, but the saving will be offset by increased overhead charges for telephones, etc. Consequently there is no way of meeting the increased charge for postage except by raising the

cost of the subscription. It seems clear to us that we have no choice in the matter. I am sure that none of you would wish to increase the extent to which the News-Letter is dependent on a subsidy, and that you will agree that we must work towards the day when with a doubled membership it will be able to meet the full cost of production. The rate for *new* subscriptions will in the future be 12s. 6d.

To make a change in existing subscriptions is a matter of great difficulty. If it were dealt with on a strictly financial basis we should have to charge members sums varying in each individual case from 2s. 1d. for subscribers who have fifty-one weeks to run to ½d. for those whose subscription terminates a week hence. You will agree that this would be quite unworkable.

We have decided, therefore, to allow existing subscriptions to stand, and are confident that our readers will help us to raise the sum of £500 which will be required to meet the increased postal charge. We have been encouraged by some of our members who, in renewing their subscriptions at the end of six months, sent us 12s. instead of 10s. the day after the Chancellor of the Exchequer presented the Budget, before any reference was made to the matter in the News-Letter. Since then a considerable number of members have sent us two shillings or half-a-crown to add to their subscriptions. Many of you will be willing, I have no doubt, to follow this example and send us an extra 2s. without bothering about the question whether your subscription has nearly a full year to run or expires at an earlier date. There are bound to be some of our members, however, who cannot pay more than they are now doing, and those of you who can afford it may be disposed to send us, as some have already done of their own initiative, a larger donation. A few substantial contributions will bring immediate relief from the strain of the deficit, which will otherwise weigh heavily on us. If the gifts received should exceed the sum required, the balance will go to the general work which the News-Letter exists to further and which has to be maintained out of resources of the News-Letter.

In order to meet as far as we can the difficulty of those who cannot afford the new rate and to encourage the formation of groups we refrain for the present from making any change in the rates for group subscriptions. A notice about these special rates is enclosed with this Letter and we hope that some more of our members may be able to start groups in their neighbourhood.

The increase in the cost of postage may have one other effect. I have, up to the present, tried to acknowledge at least by post-card as many as possible of the letters which readers of the News-Letter send me commenting on its contents. It will probably be a right economy to do this to a lesser extent in the future, when even the barest acknowledgment would cost 2d. You may rest assured that even if you do not have a reply, anything that you write will be carefully read and digested by us.

Yours sincerely,

J. H. Oldham

Subscriptions. — The rate of subscriptions to the News-Letter is 12s. 6d. ($3.25 in U.S.A. and Canada) for one year, and 6s. 6d. ($1.80 in U.S.A. and Canada) for six months, and 3s. 6d. for three months.

All communications and subscriptions should be sent to—
THE CHRISTIAN NEWS-LETTER, 20, BALCOMBE STREET, DORSET SQUARE, LONDON, N.W.1.

Published by Dr. J. H. Oldham for the Council on the Christian Faith and the Common Life and printed by St. Clements Press, Ltd., Portugal Street, London, W.C.2.

THE CHRISTIAN NEWS-LETTER

The Supplement
No. 29

MAY 15th, 1940

SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION AND THE WAR

My dear Oldham,

In the News-Letter you have repeatedly put forward a plea for a society deserving the name of a new Christendom. In your C.N.-L. book, *The Resurrection of Christendom*, you have further indicated some of the standards by which a society entitled to be so described must be judged. The foundations thus having been laid, the time seems to have come to apply these standards to the tasks that lie ahead and to take the first practical steps in at least some of the fields of moral, political and social reform.

THE WAR AS A STAGE IN OUR EVOLUTION

I feel sure that, in principle, you agree with such a demand for action. Yet there seems to be one great obstacle to making a start: the war. The outbreak of war seems to have interrupted the normal course of history, and to have placed us in a state of emergency which must be brought to an end before we can take up again the struggle for human progress. Common as this idea is, I feel bound to dispute it.

As a challenge to popular belief I venture to state here the case for what I would call "taking the war seriously." The war appears to me by no means a mere interruption in the evolution of our society but, distressing as it is, as an organic fact and stage in this evolution. It is a necessary factor in our growth, and the basis from which the work of reconstruction has to start. All our planning for peace remains utopian if the foundations of the future cannot be laid in the present, and the disillusionment of the younger generation, to which you have often referred, seems to me quite justified if we have nothing to offer them now.

Though I will not attempt to do so, I think I could defend my attitude on religious grounds. Whatever side we take in the pacifist issue we cannot shirk the responsibility for any part of the historical process, pleasant or hideous. A war is not an earthquake, neither in its origin nor in its result. It is not a natural but a social event; we have the opportunity of influencing its course and of determining its outcome. Hence, we shall not be obedient to the prophetic call, unless we do all that is in our power to turn this war to account as a means of advance towards better things, whatever we mean by this.

My aim is, however, more modest. All I want to show is that, if we stand for moral and social reform, we cannot take the war seriously enough. As an historical event it closes an epoch of Western civilisation; as a political and moral judgment on the past it opens our eyes to the real terms of peace, national and international; as the all-embracing frame of present life it is our only opportunity for action.

THE END OF AN EPOCH

We must make clear to ourselves in the first place that this war has brought an era of human history to its close—the era of European leadership of the world. For four hundred years the world was under the political and economic domination of Western Europe. The superiority

of our arms and industries had delivered into our hands the human and material resources of the other continents. On this leadership our political peace and our social progress rested.

Yet this modern world is partly the result of shirked responsibilities. At the end of the Middle Ages, Christian Europe dissolved into a group of rival national States. The unstable balance of feudalism gave way to the struggle of classes. All the time a new supra-national unification and social adjustment had been overdue. The European nations evaded the issue by conquering the rest of the world. Great Britain, to a greater extent than any other country, reaped lasting benefit in this political and economic expansion.

Many generations regarded this world order as natural and permanent. We are now forced to realise that it was only an historical interlude in the evolution of mankind. It was due not to inborn intellectual or moral superiority, but to our advances in science, technique and political organisation. During the nineteenth century other peoples joined in the race and became successful competitors, wresting more and more of our privileges from us.

We have neither the power or any moral claim to resist this development. We cannot de-industrialise the United States or Japan, or stop the national awakening in the East nor the economic progress of the Dominions. Moreover, there is a profound justice in this development, since it tends to a state of international equality and realises among the nations of the world the ideals for which we claim to stand in national politics. Yet the effects of this evolution on our political and social order will be overwhelming.

The symptoms of the approaching end of an era are by no means new. Even before the close of the nineteenth century expansion became difficult. For thirty years the international atmosphere grew more and more tense. The last world war was the first thunderstorm, though we did not understand its significance and stuck to our privileges nationally and internationally. We received warning after warning—the fall of our export trade, the distressed areas, the mass of unemployment, the rise of the United States to the rank of the first world power, the revolution in Russia, the growth of Fascism and Nazism. Now we are caught in self-destruction for the second time, and this time there is no escape. Whoever may win the war, the end of European domination, political and economic, has come Having refused to share our privileges, we are now destroying them ourselves in fratricide—the first shall be the last.

We cannot arrest the march of fate, not even by stopping the war. It is a sound instinct in France and Britain which finds expression in the phrase *il faut en finir*—we must put an end to it. What is this "it"? Nazism itself is nothing but a desperate attempt to arrest the march of fate by force. It attempts to maintain internal privileges by tyranny, to gain new external privileges by conquest. Nazism stands for all that is bad in European history, and is quite consistent when it invokes the past wrongdoings of others for its own justification. But destiny is inflexible. To prepare for war, Germany had to destroy her old political and economic order. In going to war she sealed the social fate of all Europe, which now must choose between union under the oppressive domination of one nation, and the surrender of her excessive privilege over the rest of the world.

THE TASKS AHEAD

We had to take up the challenge to keep the path open to a European future. But while there is no European future short of victory, we know that victory will not be enough. It will be opportunity, not fulfilment.

Opportunity for what? The answer cannot be discovered by abstract scheming, so popular among the progressive minds in this country. It can only be read in the concrete shape of the historical moment, that is to say, in the deeper meaning of the war as a judgment on the national and international policy of the European peoples. It is a call to repentance for the collective sins of omission in every field of social life during more than four hundred years. And we can be sure that, before restitution has been made, the war will, quite literally, not come to an end, however many forms of armistice and armed peace may interrupt its military course.

This is the reason why we can indeed lay down the "conditions for peace," once we have truly understood the causes of the war. Not because it is good and beautiful in itself are we called upon at this turn of history to build up European unity—political, economic and cultural—but because peace cannot be secure until national sovereignties in Europe are combined in a higher political unit. There can be neither peace nor welfare, unless a substitute for the lost expansion is found in a greater consumption throughout Europe. There can be neither political nor economic co-operation unless the same moral principles are accepted everywhere.

That is the only way in which peace can really be restored, and for the same reason the new international order must be balanced by an internal order of social equality. There can be no true community between nations unless there is community within the nations. Economic stability cannot be achieved in our over-industrialised continent unless by redistribution of wealth and income we create the mass demand necessary to employ men and resources. There can be no revival of European culture unless we accept and carry out the principles of social justice at home.

ACTION NOW

And yet all this is still not definite enough. A "New Christendom" and in some respects even Federal Union, may be a perfect formulation of our "vision" of the future. But neither of them does show the *way* to the realisation of our vision, nor can it assure the presence of the necessary moral *will.* To achieve this, we shall have to rethink our general ideas about the new national and international order in terms of a policy of action, and of an action which can start to-day. Our conduct of the war, at home and abroad, will decide the kind of peace and social order ahead.

Evasion and hesitation have led us to the brink of the precipice. Now we *cannot* wait any longer, since we are involved in a totalitarian war. Whether we like it or not, the necessity of carrying on such a war for a period of years will completely re-shape our political and social institutions. Unless we direct every possible energy during the period of the war to influencing in the right direction this process of reorganisation, we shall find ourselves, when it ends, in a social situation which can no longer be moulded in the way we desire. It will already have assumed an unalterable, totalitarian and pagan shape.

But we *need* not wait any longer, since the war presents a unique opportunity. It necessarily brings about a close alliance between the middle classes, and in particular those of them who are engaged in administrative tasks and the working classes. This association and co-operation is the indispensable condition of national survival but also of peaceful social re-organisation.

THE WAY TO SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY

The conclusion is that our efforts during the coming months and years should be addressed towards influencing the conduct of the war in all its aspects.

This must not be regarded as a deviation from the long-term policy—perhaps a very long-term policy—that may be needed before any society that might be described as a new Christendom can be brought into existence. It should rather be looked on as the first stage in such a policy.

There are many points of attack at which a " Christian " policy for the war period might start. Here I will offer only three illustrations of the way in which the general standards in which we believe might at once be applied.

There are outstanding points of attack to be found in such topical problems as the financing of the war, the reconstruction of our system of taxation, the social organisation of war production, or the tackling of questions connected with rationing and the Keynes' plan. For sheer reasons of administrative efficiency it would be highly impractical to embark on a scheme of wholesale nationalisation of industry at the present moment. But these problems, which are now arising and which must be dealt with in the course of the war itself, can be solved in such a way as to bring nearer the solution of the urgent problem of a re-distribution of wealth and income in accordance with the demands of social justice.

Second, we are all agreed that educational reform on the lines suggested in recent Supplements of the C.N.-L. is a pre-condition for the building up of a new society. In terms of policy for the war period this means that after all we have to seize on the opportunities for communal education offered by evacuation, and at the same time to concentrate on the training of industrial apprentices in war industries. Whatever education as a social process may mean under different conditions, this is what it means for the mass of the people in war.

Finally, to take an instance from the realm of international politics, we have to admit with a feeling of shame that the Governments of Britain and France are in their actions far ahead of the vague speculations in which public opinion, including many progressive minds, indulges. I refer to the close co-operation between Britain and France which not only provides a test case for supra-national federation generally, but will decide whether the political future of Europe shall be imperialistic or truly international. There is no more important task for the spiritual leaders and cultural workers of the two nations than to make this alliance an instrument of the European mission.

These are only a few illustrations. I am convinced that a concrete programme, dealing with all important aspects of life during the war period, can be worked out in quite a short time. Certainly no one can say that even the most ideal reconstruction of our social system will enable us to win the war. But it is evident that unless we do make an attempt to organise our national life during the war period in accordance with the Christian values, we shall definitely lose the peace. We can prepare for the future only by mastering our *present* tasks in the spirit of the future which we seek. The crucial test is not schemes for the future, but *action* in the present.—Ever yours, ADOLF LOEWE.

All communications and subscriptions should be sent to—

THE CHRISTIAN NEWS-LETTER, 20, BALCOMBE STREET,

DORSET SQUARE, LONDON, N.W.1.

Published by Dr. J. H. Oldham for the Council on the Christian Faith and the Common Life and printed by St. Clements Press, Ltd., Portugal Street, London, W.C.2.